

Remarks at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the World War II Memorial November 11, 2000

Thank you very much. Secretary Cohen, thank you for your service. To the other members of the Cabinet and the administration, I thank you. General Woerner, thank you for your lifetime of service and your leadership of our Battlefield Monuments Commission. Ambassador Williams, thank you, and all the members of the World War II Memorial Committee. Archbishop Hannan, thank you for your prayers and your leadership in the war.

And to Captain Luther Smith of the Tuskegee Airmen, he told you his story, but I can't help noting that in telling you his story he was rather like a lot of World War II veterans. He left out a few things. He left out the Distinguished Flying Cross, seven air medals, the Purple Heart, and a POW medal. Like many of our soldiers in World War II, his bravery went unmentioned, but we are, nonetheless, profoundly grateful for it.

I'd like to thank Fred Smith, my friend of many years, for stepping up and helping to raise all this money; and also, my friend Tom Hanks, who played Captain John Miller in "Saving Private Ryan" and is now making sure that America never forgets all the Private Ryans. We are grateful for him, as well.

I thank Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, who recognized the vision of her constituent Roger Durbin and introduced this legislation and has fought for it ever since. I can tell you as someone who has dealt with her for 8 years, there is no more determined person in the United States Congress. I am only amazed that this memorial was not built in 1988, since she got behind it. Thank you, Marcy Kaptur, for what you are doing.

I thank the Members of Congress who are here. Senator Thurmond once told me that he was the oldest man who took a glider into Normandy. I don't know what that means, 56 years later, but I'm grateful for all of the Members of Congress, beginning with Senator Thurmond and all the others who are here, who never stopped serving their country.

But most of all, I want to say a thank-you to Bob Dole and to Elizabeth for their service to America. As my tenure as President draws to a close, I have had, as you might imagine,

an up-and-down relationship with Senator Dole. But I liked even the bad days. I always admired him. I was always profoundly grateful for his courage and heroism in war and 50 years of service in peace. After a rich and long life, he could well have done something else with his time in these last few years, but he has passionately worked for this day. And I am profoundly grateful.

I also want to thank the men and women and boys and girls all across our country who participated in this fundraising drive, taking this memorial from dream to reality. Their stories are eloquent testimony to its meaning. As Senator Dole and I were sitting up here watching the program unfold today, he told me an amazing story. He said, "One day a man from eastern Pennsylvania called our office. He was a 73-year-old Armenian-American named Sarkis Acopian. And he said, 'I'd like to make a contribution to this memorial. Where do I mail my check?'"—just called. So he was given the address, and shortly after, this man's—who was grateful for the opportunities America has given him—check arrived in the office, a check for \$1 million.

But there were all the other checks, as well, amounting to over \$140 million in private contributions. There were contributions from those still too young to serve, indeed, far too young to remember the war. More than 1,100 schools across our Nation have raised money for the memorial by collecting cans, holding bake sales, putting on dances.

Let me just tell you about one of them, Milwaukie High School in Milwaukie, Oregon. Five years ago a teacher named Ken Buckles wanted to pay tribute to the World War II veterans. He and his students searched out local veterans and invited them to school for a living history day. Earlier this week, Living History Day 2000 honored more than 3,000 veterans with a recreated USO show that filled the pro basketball arena. Last year's event raised \$10,000 for the memorial, and students think that this year they'll raise even more.

Now, what makes those kids fundraise and organize and practice for weeks on end? Many have grandparents and other relatives who

fought in the war, but there must be more to it than that. They learned from their families and teachers that the good life they enjoy as Americans was made possible by the sacrifices of others more than a half-century ago. And maybe most important, they want us to know something positive about their own generation, as well, and their desire to stand for something greater than themselves.

They didn't have the money to fly out here today, but let's all of us send a loud thank-you to the kids at Milwaukie High School and their teacher, Ken Buckles, and all the other young people who have supported this cause. [Applause]

The ground we break today is not only a timeless tribute to the bravery and honor of one generation but a challenge to every generation that follows. This memorial is built not only for the children whose grandparents served in the war but for the children who will visit this place a century from now, asking questions about America's great victory for freedom.

With this memorial, we secure the memory of 16 million Americans, men and women who took up arms in the greatest struggle humanity has ever known. We hallow the ground for more than 400,000 who never came home. We acknowledge a debt that can never be repaid.

We acknowledge, as well, the men and women and children of the homefront, who tended the factories and nourished the faith that made victory possible; remember those who fought faithfully and bravely for freedom, even as their own full humanity was under assault—African-Americans who had to fight for the right to fight for our country, Japanese-Americans who served bravely under a cloud of unjust suspicion, Native American code talkers who helped to win the war in the Pacific, women who took on new roles in the military and at home—remember how, in the heat of battle and the necessity of the moment, all of these folks moved closer to being simply Americans.

And we remember how, after World War II, those who won the war on foreign battlefields dug deep and gave even more to win the peace here at home, to give us a new era of prosperity, to lay the foundation for a new global society and economy by turning old adversaries into new allies, by launching a movement for social justice that still lifts millions of Americans into dignity and opportunity.

I would like to say once more before I go to the veterans here today what I said in Normandy in 1994: "Because of you, my generation and those who have followed live in a time of unequaled peace and prosperity. We are the children of your sacrifice, and we thank you forever."

But now, as then, progress is not inevitable; it requires eternal vigilance and sacrifice. Earlier today, at the Veterans Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, we paid tribute to the fallen heroes of the United States Ship *Cole*, three of whom have recently been buried at Arlington. The captain of the ship and 20 of the crewmembers were there today. We honor them.

Next week I will go to Vietnam to honor the men and women America lost there, to stand with those still seeking a full accounting of the missing. But at the same time, I want to give support to Vietnamese and Americans who are working together to build a better future in Vietnam, under the leadership of former Congressman and former Vietnam POW Pete Peterson, who has reminded us that we can do nothing about the past, but we can always change the future. That's what all of you did after the war with Germans, Italians, and Japanese. You built the world we love and enjoy today.

The wisdom this monument will give us is to learn from the past and look to the future. May the light of freedom that will stand at the center of this memorial inspire every person who sees it to keep the flame of freedom forever burning in the eyes of our children and to keep the memory of the greatest generation warm in the hearts of every new generation of Americans.

Thank you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. on The National Mall. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Fred F. Woerner, USA (Ret.), Chairman, and Ambassador Haydn Williams, Commissioner, American Battle Monuments Commission; retired Archbishop Philip Hannan of New Orleans, a chaplain in the 82d Airborne Division, USA, during World War II; Capt. Luther Smith, USAF (Ret.), member of the Tuskegee Airmen, an African-American bomber escort squadron in World War II; Frederick W. Smith, national cochairman, actor Tom Hanks, national spokesperson, and

former Senator Bob Dole, national chairman, National World War II Memorial Campaign; Senator

Dole's wife, Elizabeth; and Comdr. Kirk Lippold, USN, captain of the U.S.S. *Cole*.

Statement on the Death of Leah Rabin *November 12, 2000*

Hillary and I were deeply saddened this morning to learn of the death of Leah Rabin. We have lost a dear friend, and the Middle East has lost a friend of peace. But the work

to which she and Yitzhak dedicated their lives must and will continue.

Our prayers are with the Rabin family and with the people of Israel.

Statement on Signing the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000 *November 13, 2000*

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 782, the "Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000." The Older Americans Act of 1965, last reauthorized by the Congress in 1992, provides essential home and community-based services, such as congregate and home-delivered meals, transportation, legal assistance, employment and volunteer opportunities, health promotion activities, pension counseling programs, and protection from abuse in institutions and in the community for millions of older persons across the United States.

I am very pleased that this bipartisan legislation includes, for the first time, an important new program designed to assist families. It provides the authorization for the National Family Caregiver Support Program, which I first proposed in 1999 as part of my long-term care initiative. This program will help hundreds of thousands of family members—spouses, adult children, and others—who are struggling to care for their frail older loved ones who are ill or disabled. Studies have shown that caregiving can take a huge emotional, physical, and financial toll on families. The support provided through this new program includes critical information, training, and counseling, as well as much needed quality respite care for those caregivers who are juggling jobs and other family responsibilities while meeting the special needs of loved ones in their care. This legislation also recognizes the challenges that grandparents and other relatives caring for children face, as well as those of

older individuals who are caring for children who have disabilities. When funded, this program will provide valuable assistance to the families who need it most.

Beyond providing this important support to families, the bill I am signing today will strengthen and improve the delivery of important daily services to our most vulnerable aging citizens through our national network of State and area agencies on aging, tribal organizations, and other members of our community, including volunteers, many of whom are older persons themselves. The new legislation gives our States, area agencies, and Tribes more flexibility in serving elders in their own communities and regions, and enhances the coordination of Federal, State, and local programs to maximize the effectiveness of program activities.

This legislation does much to position our rapidly growing aging population for the decades ahead when the number of older persons in need of help will be much larger and more diverse. The Act continues to focus attention on the needs of those in greatest social and economic need, with particular attention to low-income minority elders, and it recognizes the needs of those older persons who live in rural areas of our country. It acknowledges the cultural differences among our tribal populations, and provides them with caregiver support and disaster relief assistance as well as promoting better coordination of services between State and tribal grantees. It promotes innovation and